THE ACQUISITION OF CHINESE AS A THIRD LANGUAGE BY JAPANESE L1/ENGLISH L2 SPEAKERS

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Abbreviation Term

AC	Accusative Marker
ASSOC	Associative -de
CAH	Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
CL	Classifier
CRS	Currently Relevant State -le
GEN	Genitive Marker
LO	Locative Marker
L1	The First Language
L2	The Second Language
L3	The Third Language
IL	Interlanguage
PFV	Perfective Aspect –le
TP	Topic Marker
TCSL	Teaching Chinese as a Second Language
3sg	Third Person Singular

CONTENTS

Introduction

The role of language transfer in second language acquisition[1] has long been the focus in the study of cross-linguistic influence. Much has been written about how the learner's existing linguistic knowledge influences the course of second language development. In the last decade, however, there have been a considerable number of books and journal articles dealing with a relatively under-explored field: the role of language transfer during third language acquisition. The question arises as to how the learner's three languages interact with each other during the language learning process.

Due to China's economic and social reforms in the last 20 years there has been an opening up to the outside world. Because of this, an increasing number of people are starting to learn Chinese. Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (hereafter TCSL) has become a booming industry. In the last few decades a considerable number of TCSL textbooks have been published in and out of China for foreign students looking to learn the Chinese language.

English, being the most widely taught foreign language in the world, is often chosen as the first foreign language of study. Many learners of Chinese are from non-English speaking countries but have some previous knowledge of English language. When their Chinese is not sufficient to meet their need for communication, they are most likely to turn to English for help. In other words, English is used frequently among second language (hereafter L2) learners of Chinese in their daily life as well as studies. The learning of Chinese therefore has certain characteristics of third language (hereafter L3) acquisition. The common L2 of the learners is English. To temporize the situation, English is commonly employed as a metalanguage in current TCSL textbooks[2]. It is undeniable that English has been playing a very important role in

[1] The term *acquisition* and *learning* will be used interchangeably throughout this work even though much of the writing on second language acquisition (e.g., Krashen) distinguishes between the two terms.

[2] The fact that most TCSL teachers in China have a limited knowledge of foreign language other than English is

designing, teaching and consuming Chinese language teaching courses and materials. It is also of great importance to find out how this common L2 operates among learners with different L1 background learning Chinese. However, research of the influence of English in TCSL has been concentrated on the teaching of Chinese to native speakers of English. Relatively little has been written about how English as L2 influences the acquisition of Chinese as L3. Also, there is lack of guidance on the application of English in TCSL. Its metalinguistic role is still largely a translation one.

Statistics shows that in 2002 there were 16,084 Japanese students in TCSL institutes all over China (see http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2003-02/26/content_745796.htm), which ranked second in *China Scholarship Council: Study in China 2002*[3]. According to Li, the principal of China National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, there are over 1,000,000 Japanese speakers learning Chinese in Japan and Chinese has been a subject of the national university entrance examinations in Japan since 1996. Therefore, conducting a research on Japanese L1/English L2 speakers learning Chinese has broad pedagogical implications. Also, since the subjects have the same native language, it is easier to control the influence of L1 in research.

The present study attempts to describe the influence of English as L2 in third-language acquisition of Chinese and its pedagogical implications by reporting and discussing the results of research carried out on how students with Japanese L1 and English L2 backgrounds acquire the Chinese perfective marker –le in their L3 (Chinese), and comparing the behaviour of those Japanese bilinguals learning Chinese with that of English native speakers learning Chinese.

I will devote the first chapter to a literature review. A brief overview of the study of language transfer and the possible affecting factors are provided.

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another practical reason for using English metalinguisitically. But it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in depth.

[3] There top 10 countries are: South Korea (36,093), Japan (16,084), USA (7,359), Indonesia (2,583), Vietnam (2,336), Thailand (1,737), Russian (1,492), France (1,341), Germany (1,226), and UK (1,061).

The second chapter is a comparison of the Chinese perfective marker –le, English past tense and the Japanese past/perfective marker –ta. The similarities and differences between them are presented and analyzed.

In the third chapter I will introduce the hypothesis of the research.

The fourth chapter is data analysis. The methodology of this research is fully described, followed by the analysis and evaluation of the results.

The last chapter is a brief summary of this paper. I will discuss possible oversights of the experiment, provide pedagogical implications of this study and conclude by calling for further research.

Chapter One Literature Review

1.1 What is transfer?

Serious thinking about language transfer dates back to a controversy in historical linguistics over 100 years ago among scholars who were primarily interested in language classification and language change rather than second language acquisition or language teaching. As an attempt to show the historical foundation of this concept, Selinker's *Rediscovering Interlanguage* (1992) references Whitney's (1881) use of the term *transfer* as cross-linguistic influence – long before any linguists thought of linking it to the behaviorism. Yet while the controversy promoted work on language contact that overlaps considerably with more recent studies of second language acquisition, discussion of language transfer most often begin with the work of

American linguists in the 1940's and 1950's. The thinking of Fries (1945), Lado (1957), and others was clearly a major catalyst of the subsequent research.

One of the most commonly cited early concepts in SLA research is from Weinreich (1953)[4]. He used the term *interference* for 'instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language' (p.1). It should be noted that Weinreich employed this term to cover any case of transfer. Nevertheless, its implication is exclusively what was later termed *negative transfer*. Since much of the influence of the native language can be facilitating, the term *transfer* gradually came to supplant *interference* and has experienced a number of re-definitions and refinement ever since. The generic term *transfer* has been supplemented by subordinate terms such as *positive transfer*, *negative transfer* (Selinker 1983), *structural transfer* (Corder 1983), *borrowing transfer* and *substratum transfer* (Thomason & Kaufman 1988), and, more recently, *interlanguage transfer* (Leung 1998).

As Odlin points out, the long-standing use of *transfer* has led to differences of opinion. Some scholars use it without restriction, yet many others have advocated abandoning the term or using it only in highly restricted ways (e.g., Corder 1983; Kellerman & Sharwood Smith 1986). In fact, much of the dislike of the term *transfer* comes from its traditional association with behaviourism.

Behaviourist views of language learning and of language teaching were predominant in the two decades following the Second World War, according to which, language learning, 'concerns, not problem solving, but the formation and performance of habits' (Brooks 1960: 49), a 'habit' consisting of an automatic response elicited by a given stimulus.

[4] Dulay and Burt (1972) claimed that the concept of *interference* used by Weinreich was distinct from that of *interference* in the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis.

However, a discussion of contractive analysis and behaviourism by Carroll (1968) makes clear that behaviourist notion of transfer as a consequence of habit formation differs from the notion of native language influence. It is mainly because the behaviourist notion of transfer often implies the extinction of earlier habits, whereas in the case of second language acquisition, the learner does not need to 'unlearn' his L1 in order to acquire L2[5].

One popular definition of language transfer is from *Random House Dictionary*:

> [T]he application of native language rules in attempted performance in a second language, in some cases resulting in deviations from target-language norms and in other cases facilitating second-language acquisition. (p. 2009)

But this definition leaves out a host of effects that there is evidence in the literature for: L2 effects on the L1 (Cook 2003), avoidance of a target language structure due to native language constraints (e.g., Gass & Selinker 1994), and most importantly, L2-L3 transfer. Indeed, language transfer is not simply a matter of the influence that 'the learner's L1 exerts on the acquisition of an L2' (Ellis 1997: 51), as other previously acquired languages can also have an effect. This suggests that the term *transfer* is not appropriate to subsume the full range of language contact effects. As mentioned previously, Kellerman & Sharwood Smith call to restrict the terminology. They limit the term *transfer* to 'processes that lead to incorporation of elements from one language to another' (1986: 1), and consider the superordinate term *cross-linguistic influence* more theory-neutral and thus more appropriate to refer to language contact phenomena such as 'transfer, interference, avoidance, borrowing and L2-related aspects of language loss' (ibid.).

Odlin's 'working definition' of *transfer* is probably a more useful way to conceive of

[5] In some cases loss of the primary language might take place.

such phenomena, as it is broad enough to encompass many different viewpoints:

> [T]ransfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired' (1989: 27)

Within this definition, Odlin includes both positive transfer and negative transfer such as underproduction, overproduction, production errors (e.g., substitutions, calques, and alterations of structures) and misinterpretations, and, also, the differences in the amount of time needed to acquire different target languages.

It should be noted that through out Odlin's *Language Transfer*, the phrase *native language transfer* is synonymous with *transfer*. However, as he admits, such usage is only a 'convenient fiction' (1989: 27). Second language viewed in this way is, of course, far from the original use of the term. It is the 'second' language in multilingual situations regardless of how many languages the learner already knows.

During the last decade, scholarship on L2-L3 transfer in general has increased considerably. With the increase there has been many more recent accounts of language transfer.

> Language transfer is best thought of as a *cover term* for a whole class of behaviors, processes and constraints, each of which has do with CLI (cross-linguistic influence), i.e. the influence and use of prior linguistic knowledge, usually but not exclusively native language (NL) knowledge.
>
> (Selinker 1992: 208)

> [transfer is] the use of the native language (or other language) information in the acquisition of an L2 (or additional language)

(Gass 1996: 321)

Both of the above definitions have captured the contemporary spirit.

1.2 Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

Of many questions raised in second language acquisition research, perhaps the most controversial is whether the native language has effect on second language acquisition at all. It would be most welcome if there were a definite yes or no answer. Unfortunately, the question is not nearly so simple. Among linguists and language teaching professionals today, there is general consensus that the L1 shapes second language acquisition, but there is no agreement on what exactly it contributes or how.

Some scholars have indeed argued for the importance of transfer; some have gone so far as to consider it the paramount fact of second language acquisition. Indeed, in light of everyday abilities such as the recognition and mimicry of foreign accents and in light of common beliefs about cross-linguistic similarities and differences, there appears to be a widespread acceptance of the idea that native language influences could greatly affect second language acquisition. However, other scholars, in particular, those who hold an innatist view of language acquisition, do not believe that the L1 influences the L2 acquisition process in any significant way.

In fact, challenges to assumptions about the importance of transfer did not have much impact of the history of language teaching until the late 1960's. The challenges that rose in that period were largely in reaction to the claims made by Lado and Fires. In the foreword to Lado's highly influential book, *Linguistic Across Culture*, Fries stated 'learning a second language … constitutes a very different task from learning the first language' (1957: i). They further argue that the difficulties of second language acquisition could be determined through contrastive analysis. In fact, the study of

transfer depends greatly on the systematic comparison of languages provided by contrastive analysis.

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (hereafter CAH) as formulated by Lado was based on the following assumption:

> [T]he student who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult.
>
> (Lado 1957:2)

The two basic claims of the CAH are:

(1) The level of difficulty experience by the learner will be directly related to the degree of linguistic difference between the L1 and L2;
(2) Difficulty will manifest itself in errors; the greater the difficulty, the more frequent the errors.

According to Ellis (1994), there are two versions of Lado's CAH that can be extracted from his writings. In its strong version, the CAH claimed that all L2 errors could be predicated by identifying the difference between the learners' native language and the target language. Lee (1968: 180), for instance, stated that 'the prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error in foreign language learning is interference coming from the learner's native language'. While in the weak version, as proposed by Wardhuagh (1970), transfer is, at best, only a partial explanation of learning difficulty, and contrastive analysis could be used only a posteriori to explain rather than predict.

The CAH had its heyday in the 1960's. There was a spate of contrastive analyses involving the major European languages (e.g., Stockwell & Bowen 1965; Stockwell, Bowen, & Martin 1965). The scholars of the 1960's recognized different kinds of

'difference' and also attributed to them different degrees of 'difficulty'. It is worth noticing that when most contrastive analysis in the 1950's and 1960's concentrated on pronunciation and grammar, Kaplan (1966) proposed that contrastive studies were possible beyond the sentence level, and his argument encouraged the study of what is now frequently termed *contrastive rhetoric*.

However, in the early 1970's a number of studies of learner language indicated that the influence of the L1 was much less than the CAH claimed[6], and therefore cast doubt on the value of contrastive analysis (e.g., Wardhaugh 1970). The strong version became empirically unsupported as many errors predicted by contrastive analysis did not actually occur (see Whitman & Jackson 1972) and it also failed to acknowledge sources of difficulty other than the learner's L1 (see Dulay & Burt 1974). At the same time, the weak version, according to James (1980), is something of a 'pseudo procedure' as it is impractical to undertake a lengthy comparison of two languages simply to confirm that errors suspected of being caused by transfer are indeed so. As Ellis (1994: 309) pointed out, the CAH is 'too simplistic and too restrictive', it gradually fell out of favour and eventually lost ground to error analysis in the 1970's.

In recent years, despite all the problems, transfer continues to be of interest to SLA researchers. Many of them still employ contrastive analysis as a tool for identifying potential areas of difficulty (Fisiak 1981). However, contrastive analysis alone is not convincing. It needs to be used hand in hand with error analysis.

1.3 Error Analysis

Unlike contrastive analysis, error analysis emphasizes actual problems encountered by the learner. According to Corder (1974), the father of Error Analysis, it has two objects: a theoretical one and an applied one. The theoretical object serves to 'elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies a second language', while the applied one

[6] These studies were based on attempts to quantify the number of transfer errors and to classify the errors.

serves to enable the learner 'to learn more efficiently by exploiting our knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes'.

Richards (1971) defines the field of error analysis as 'dealing with the differences between the way people learning a language speak, and the way adult native speakers of the language use the language'. He also proposes a three-way classification of error, namely, *interference errors*, *intralingual errors* and *developmental errors*.

The interference errors are those caused by the influence of the learner's mother tongue on production of the target language in presumably those areas where the languages clearly differ (Robinett & Schachter 1983). Researchers like Brown (1973) have found that interlingual interference is most powerful at the early stage of language learning, when the priori linguistic knowledge is the only experience for the learners to rely on. As their progress, more and more intralingual interference will appear. The learning of a third language provides an interesting context for research. Depending upon a number of factors including the linguistic and cultural relatedness of the language and the context of learning, there are varying degrees of interlingual interference from both the first and second language to the third language, especially if the second and the third language are closely related or the learner is attempting a third language shortly after beginning a second language.

The intralingual errors are those originating within the structure of a language itself. Complex rule-learning behaviour is typically characterized by overgeneralization, incomplete application of rules, and failure to learn conditions for rule application. When the complexity of the language structure encourages such learning problems, learners with different linguistic backgrounds tend to produce similar errors.

The developmental errors reflect the strategies the learner uses to acquires the language. These errors show that the learner, sometimes completely independent of the native language, makes false hypotheses about the target language based on limited

exposure to it. Corder (1981) points out that a major justification for labelling an error as developmental comes from noting similarities to errors produced by the children who are acquiring the target language as L1.

1.3.1 Models for Error Analysis

Corder (1967 & 1974) identified a three-stage model for error analysis:

1. Data collection: Recognition of idiosyncracy.
2. Description: Accounting for idiosyncratic dialect.
3. Explanation (the ultimate object of error analysis).

Brown (1994) and Ellis (1995) elaborate on this model. Ellis (1997) and Hubbard *et al.* (1996) give practical advice and provide clear examples of how to identify and analyze learners' errors. Gass & Selinker (1994) identify six steps followed in conducting an error analysis, namely, collecting data, identifying errors, classifying errors, quantifying errors, analyzing source of error, and remediating for errors.

1.3.2 Sources of Errors

Stenson (1974) declares that other than the classification Richards (1971) proposes, errors may result from the classroom situation. That is, the learner might make errors because of a misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or word in the textbook. This kind of errors is termed as *induced errors*.

Other researchers have identified different kinds of sources of errors. For example, Selinker's (1972, from Richards 1974: 37) five sources of errors (language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of second language learning, strategies of second language communication, and overgeneralization of TL linguistic material), Corder's (1974) three sources of errors (language transfer, overgeneralization or analogy, and methods or materials used in the teaching), Richards & Simpson's (1974) seven

sources of errors (language transfer, intralingual interference, sociolinguistic situation, modality, age, successions of approximative systems and universal hierarchy of difficulty), James' (1998) three main diagnosis-based categories of error (interlingual, intralingual and learning strategy-based errors), and Dulay & Burt's (1974) four types of "goofs" (interference-like goofs, L1 developmental goofs, ambiguous goofs, unique goofs).

1.3.3 Problems with Error Analysis

While error analysis research has done much to show the complexity of acquisition behaviours, it is not without its own problems (Schachter & Celce-Murcia 1977; Long & Sato 1984). First, its total reliance on errors does not give the whole picture. Second, there are difficulties identifying source of errors.

1.4 New Evidence for the Importance of Transfer

The empirical failures of CAH and the important similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition brought great challenge to the notion of transfer. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, the empirical research led to new evidence for the importance of transfer. There are a large number of studies comparing the grammar, vocabulary, and so forth of learners with different L1 indicating acquisition differences attributable to cross-linguistic influence (e.g., Ringbom & Palmberg 1976; Schachter & Rutherford 1979; Jansen, Lalleman & Muysken 1984; White 1985; Schuman 1986; Singler 1988). Despite their different perspectives on how transfer occurs, most of the principal researchers view it as a fundamental SLA process.

Selinker (1972, 1983), for instance, considers language transfer to be one of the five processes central to language learning and offers empirical suggestions for identifying and measuring L1 effects. He cautions that the existence of transfer can not be established unless frequency analysis reveals that a 'statistically significant trend in the

speaker's native language appears….and is then paralleled by a significant trend toward the same alternative in the speaker's interlanguage behavior' (1983: 50). Gass (1983, 1984) also considers language transfer, which she defines as the superposition of L1 patterns onto L2 patterns, to be a necessary second language learning process. She adds another criterion to Selinker's statistical significance: before attributing a given interlanguage feature to L1 influence, the researcher should conduct a comparison between native speakers of a language that exhibits that particular feature and native speakers of other languages that do not. Indeed, evidence of significance and control of the L1 background variable are needed in order to strengthen the validity of any claim of cross-linguistic influence.

Partly in reaction to the CAH, according to which transfer will more likely occur between typologically distant languages, Anderson developed the Transfer to Somewhere principle:

> [A] grammatical form or structure will occur consistently and to a significant extent in interlanguage as a result of transfer *if and only if* there already exists within the L2 input the potential for (mis-)generalization from the input to produce the same form or structure.
>
> (Anderson 1983:178; emphasis addded)

According to Anderson, L1 structure must be consistent with natural acquisitional principles and the preferred structures should be free, invariant, functionally simple, and frequently occurring morphemes. Therefore, typological similarity and structural congruence actually increase the likelihood of transfer between the native and target languages. Although intuitively appealing, this principle is unable to account for the full range of language contact phenomena during SLA. For instance, it disregards the obvious fact that learners with divergent L1 backgrounds do produce the same L2 errors.

Kellerman (1983) takes a view of language transfer complementary to Anderson's by developing the concept of *transferability*: 'the probability with which a structure will be transferred relative to other structures in the L1' (p. 117). Whereas Anderson focuses on L1 and L2 congruence, Kellerman's definition is based on the learner's perceived language distance, regardless of the particular target language.

Kellermans' framework marks a shift in the general focus in the literature on cross-linguistic influence. The most recent perspective emphasizes the role of L1 conceptual system in the L2 learner's interlanguage. For example, in Pavlenko and Jarvis' (2001) study on *conceptual transfer*, which they define as 'all instances where conceptual representations are involved in linguistic manifestations of cross-linguistic influence' (p. 288), they look at the narrative productions in English and Russian from 22 Russian L2 speakers of English, comparing them to the productions of English and Russian monolinguals, and identify instances of possible conceptual transfer. The results show evidence of L1-L2 conceptual transfer and supports Kellerman's (1995) claim that linguistic transfer is largely driven by the conceptual need to find adequate linguistic means of expression in the L2.

Another recent development is the study of multilingual transfer. That is, language transfer occurs not only in the process of acquiring the second language but also when three or more languages are in contact. As Murphy (2004) points out, rather than viewing the study of third language acquisition simply as an extension of SLA research, the current trend is to consider the L3 learner as a learner with a unique and specific linguistic configuration (De Angelis & Selinker 2001). Cook (1995), for instance, argues that *multicompetence*, the linguistic competence of a multilingual learner, is different from that of a monolingual learner.

1.5 Factors Affecting Language Transfer

As the literature on language transfer shows, there are many factors interacting to

promote language transfer in both L2 and L3 acquisition. These factors can be loosely divided into linguistic factors and non-linguistic factors.

Linguistic factors include factors such as linguistic typology (Weinreich 1953; Anderson 1983; Gass 1983; Jarvis & Odlin 2000; Odlin 1989; Selinker & Lakshmanan 1993; Kellerman 1983, 1995; DeBot 1992; Poulisse 1990; Jarvis 2000; Cenoz 2001; De Angelis & Selinker 2001; Ecke 2001; Fuller 1999; Hammarberg 2001; Ringbom 1986, 2001; Williams & Hammarberg 1998), frequency (Larsen-Freeman 1976; Kellerman 1983; Faerch & Kasper 1986; Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994; Williams & Hammarberg 1998), word class (i.e. the distinguishing between content and function words) (Faerch & Kasper 1986; Odlin 1989; Ringbom 1986, 2001; Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994; De Angelis & Selinker 2001; Cenoz 2001), the degree of markedness (Gass 1984; Kellerman 1983) and the degree of morpheme boundedness of individual lexical items (Weinreich 1953; Andersen 1983; Kellerman 1983; Gass 1984; Faerch & Kaspar 1986; Selinker & Lakshmanan 1993; Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994; Fuller 1999; Jarvis & Odlin 2000; De Angelis & Selinker 2001).

Non-linguistic factors include the learner's level of proficiency (Kellerman 1983; Ringbom 1986, 2001; Odlin 1989; Shanon 1991; Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994; Dewaele 1998, 2001; Williams & Hammarberg 1998; Fuller 1999; Jarvis 2000; Hammarberg 2001; De Angelis & Selinker 2001), the amount of target language exposure and use (Ringbom 1986; Odlin 1989; Jarvis 2000; Dewaele 2001), language mode (De Bot 1992; Poulisse & Bongaerts 1994; Selinker & Baumgartner-Cohen 1995; Green 1998; Dewaele 1998; Roelof 1998; Williams & Hammarberg 1998; Fuller 1999; Hammarberg 2001; Grosjean 2001; De Angelis & Selinker 2001; Ringbom 2001), the learner's linguistic awareness (Mägiste 1984; Cook 1992, 1995; Grosjean 1995, 2001; De Angelis & Selinker 2001), the learner's age (Odlin 1989; Selinker & Lakshmanan 1993; Cenoz 2001), the learner's educational background and literacy (Odlin 1989; Fuller 1999). Also, there is a more general factor, context (Odlin 1989; Dewaele 1998, 2001; Grosjean 2001).

The factors range from the general to the more specific, and interact in complex ways. They sometimes override each other, sometimes converge to cause the incorporation of a non-target item during L2 and L3 production. Each of the factors is operative in cross-linguistic influence in general, but their effect can change depending on the status of the languages involved. During third language acquisition, some of their presence seems particularly to facilitate language transfer. Among the most important factors for L2-L3 transfer are typology, language mode, proficiency, and frequency of use. There are also factors in particular to multilingual learners, such as the 'foreign language effect' (Selinker & Baumgartner-Cohen 1995) and 'recency' or the 'last language effect' (Bentahila 1975; Rivers, 1979; Shanon 1991; Williams & Hammarberg 1998; Cenoz 2001; Hammarberg 2001).

An in-depth exploration of all the factors is beyond the scope of this paper. However, by providing a brief summary of the affecting factors, both linguistic and non-linguistic, I hope to show some of the complexities and unique features that characterize the process of SLA in light of current studies of third language acquisition.

Chapter Two Comparison of Chinese Perfective Marker –Le, English Past tense, and Japanese Perfective/Perfective Marker –Ta

According to researchers like Kellerman (1983), the transferability of two languages depends largely on their linguistic distance. As far as the types of language are concerned, Chinese is classified as an analytic or isolating language. That is, in Chinese, nearly all morphemes are free morphemes which encode information that in other languages would be represented by inflectional affixes. Japanese is an agglutinating language, in which words typically consist of a root and a series of

affixes, each of which encodes a single piece of the meaning, while English is an inflectional or fusional language characterized by the presence of inflectional affixes that encode several bits of meaning at once.

The British Foreign Service, according to the linguistic or structural distance of any particular language from English, classifies, languages into different groups: Japanese, Burmese, Chinese and Korean being the remotest language from English; Danish, German and Spanish, being the closest languages, and Polish, Russian, Persian and Turkish being in between the two groups (Corder 1981). However, another classification mentioned in Corder's books shows that English, which has fewer inflections on words, is typologically closer to Chinese than the other languages in the Indo-European language family.

Although the overall linguistic distance among Chinese, English and Japanese are difficult to measure, there are still opportunities for transfer. I selected the language area where English and Chinese diverge: i.e. where the structures are formally similar but not identical in the two languages (post-verbal –le and suffix -ed). According to literature (e.g. Zhao & Shen 1984; Ma 1977, 1985; Dai 1985; Sun 1993; Zhao 1996) and my own experience of teaching Mandarin Chinese, the learners often transfer the concept of (English) past tense into Chinese when acquiring the Chinese perfective marker –le[7]. In their *Mandarin Chinese: A functional Reference Grammar*, Li & Thompson (1981) give a detailed explanation of this phenomenon:

> [E]ven though –le doesn't *mean* past tense, many perfective events reported in speech are events that occurred prior to the time of speaking. This means that there is a correlation between events in the past and the appearance of –le: ordinarily,

[7] Other researchers use different terms for this grammatical item. In early reach on Chinese language and TCSL textbooks, terms originated from studies on inflectional languages are used. Le was seen as a *suffix* (e.g. in Elementary Chinese published in 1972). In current TCSL textbooks, the post-verb -le is commonly termed *aspect particle* (see Huang 1996; Lu 1996). Some researchers also term it –le1 as opposed to the sentence final le (modal particle) –le2. In this paper, we adopt Li & Thompson's term *perfective marker*, which better captures the nature of –le.

unless the context makes it clear that a different time is being referred to, a perfective sentence with –le will be understood to refer to past time. On the other hand, it does not follow from this that past-time events must be perfective; only those past-time events that are bounded will occur with –le.

As clearly distinguished by Zhao and Shen (1984), over 50% sentences in their Chinese-English/English-Chinese translation corpus are translated from Chinese sentences with –le into English past tense or the other way round[8]. Therefore, it is not surprising at all that the learners confuse the rules regarding the Chinese perfective marker –le with English past tense. The resemblance of the resemblance between Japanese past tense and English past tense problematizes this issue even further.

There follows a description of the differences and similarities between the rules concerning Chinese perfective marker –le, English past tense and Japanese perfective/past marker –ta.

2.1 Tense and Aspect

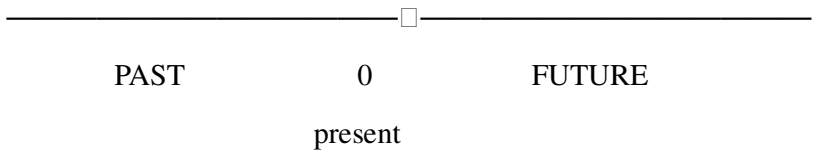
2.1.1 The Tense System

The meaning of *tense* can be traced back to the Latin word *tempus* for time. According to Lyons (1977), tense 'grammaticalizes the relationship which holds between the time of the situation that is being described and the temporal zero point of the deictic context' (p. 68). Comrie (1985) argues that in this concept the word 'situation' is a technical term with broader meaning than the corresponding word in ordinary English. It is to express processes, events, states, etc.. As stressed by Lyons, 'the crucial fact about tense, …, is that it is a deictic category. A tensed proposition, …will contain a reference to some point or period of time which cannot be identified except in terms of

[8] Within the total number of 1,364 sentences on different topics, 715 have the correlation between English past tense and the Chinese perfective marker –le.

zero-point of utterance' (Lyons 1977: 682).

The term *absolute tense* is used to refer to tenses which take the present moment as their deictic centre (Comrie 1985: 36). Comrie (1985) assumes that time can be represented as a straight line, with the past represented conventionally to the left and the future to the right. The present moment can be represented by a point labelled on the line.



The traditional three basic tenses, i.e., present, past and future tense, are established within this framework.

A marker of *tense* relates the time of the occurrence of the situation to the time that situation is brought up in speech. English, for example, has past tense. The suffix *–ed* signals that the act of proposing took place before the time of speaking. Chinese has no markers of tense. It does not use verb affixes to signal the relation between the time of the occurrence of the situation and the time that situation is brought up in speech.

2.1.2 The Aspect System

The category of aspect is very different from that of tense. It refers to a grammatical category that reflects the way in which the verb action is regarded or experienced with respect to time (Quirk 1985: 188). Unlike tense, aspect is not deictic, in the sense that it is refers not to the time relation between a situation and the moment of its being mentioned in speech, but to 'how the situation itself is being viewed with respect to its own internal makeup' (Li & Thompson 1981:184). The two types of aspect, the perfective and the progressive, can be seen as realizing a basic contrast of aspect

between the action viewed as an event in its entirety (perfective), and the action viewed as an ongoing-duration, i.e., in progress (progressive). In Mandarin, the marker of perfective aspect is –le (perfective aspect can also be expressed by a 'perfectivizing expresstion'), the imperfective progressive markers are -zai and -zhe.

2.2 Chinese Perfective Marker Le

The use of the Chinese perfective marker –le is rather complicated. It could not be summed up better than in Li & Thompson's book, *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*:

> [T]he verbal aspect suffix –le expresses perfectivity, that is, it indicates that an event is being viewed in its entirety or as a whole. An event is viewed in its entirety if it is bounded temporally, spatially, or conceptually. There are essentially four ways in which an event can be bounded: …(1) the events are quantified, (2) the events are specific, (3) the verbs have inherently bounded meanings, or (4) there are following events.

I will now summarize Li & Thompson's work regarding the use of the perfective –le.

(1) A Quantified Event

A verb typically will occur with –le if the event signalled by the verb is limited by overt phrases naming the extent to which that event occurred, the amount of time it took, or the number of times it happened. For example,

□□□□□□□□

ta shui –le san ge zhongtou

3sg sleep PFV three – CL hour

'She slept for three hours.'

(3sg = third person singular, PFV = perfective aspect -le, CL = classifier)

Similarly, a verb with a specific quantify of the direct object will also typically occur with –le because the quantified direct object serves to bound the event signalled by the verb. For example:

□□□□□□□□□□□□

ta zai mianbao shang mo le yidian huangyou

3sg at bread above apply PFV a little butter

'He buttered the bread.'

(2) Definite or Specific Event

A verb will occur with -le if the direct object is understood as definite noun phrase. There are various types of definite direct objects:

1. Name

□□□□□□□

wo renshi le lao Wang.

I meet PFV old Wang

'I met old Wang.'

2. Pronoun

□□□□□□□

ni hui le ni ziji.

You destroy PFV you self

'You destroyed yourself.'

3. Genitive modifier

□□□□□□□□

ta pian le ta de meimei

She cheat PFV she GEN sister

'She cheated her sister.'

(GEN = genitive marker)

4. Demonstrative Modifier

□□□□□□□□

wo xiangdao le nage ren.

I though of PFV that person.

'I thought of that person.'

5. Relative Clause Modifier

□□□□□□□□□□

wo kan le xin chuban de ziliao

I look PFV new pubilish ASSOC materials

'I looked at the newly published figures.'

(ASSOC = associative -de)

6. Noun Phrase with -ba

□□□□□□

ta ba che mai le

he –ba car sell PFV

'He sold the car.'

(3) Verbs with Inherent Bounded Meaning

Verbs like si 'to die', wang 'to forget', represent specific, bounded events by virtue of

their meaning. That is, this kind of verbs have their end points built into their meanings. For example:

□□□□□□

ta qunian si le

He last year die PFV

'He died last year.'

□□□□□□□□

Wo wang le ta de dizhi

I forget PFV he GEN address

'I forgot his address.'

(4) First Event in a Sequence

Sometimes an event is bounded by being the first event in a sequence, where what is important is that after one event has taken place, another one happens or a new state materializes. In such cases, the first event is of interest as an unanalyzed whole; the speaker signals that its occurrence is bounded by the subsequent event. In these instances –le is used, and the sentence can often be translated with 'after', 'when', or 'now that' in English. For example:

□□□□□□□

wo chi wan le ni chi

I eat finish PFV you eat

'After I have finished eating, then you eat.'

□□□□□□□□□

wo kan wan le bao jiu shui

I look finish PFV paper at once sleep

'When I finish reading the paper, I will go to sleep.'

So far it has been shown that the conditions for the use of the Chinese perfective marker –le are quite straightforward. It is used when the event described by a sentence is perfective, which means that the event is bounded. An event is bounded (1) if it is temporal or spatial limits are specified; (2) if it signals a specific event and its direct object is definite, (3) if boundedness is inherent in the meaning of the verb of the sentence, or (4) if it is followed by another event.

2.3 English Past Tense

According to Quirk, the past tense combines two features of meaning:

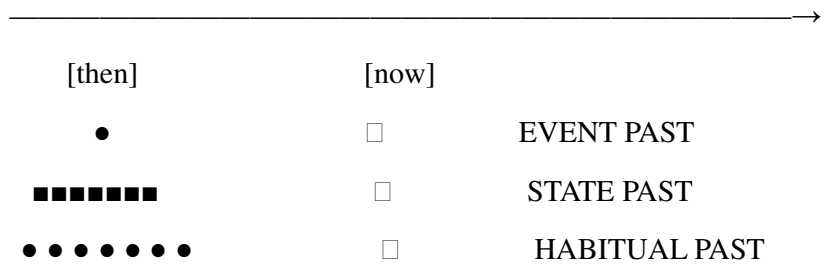
(a) The event/state must have taken place in the past, with a gap between its completion and the present moment.
(b) The speaker or writer must have in mind a definite time at which the event/state took place.

(Quirk 1985: 183)

Canavan (1983) also points out that the basic meaning of the simple past tense is to denote definite past time, i.e., what took place at a given time or in a given period before the present moment. Ota's (1963: 19) description of the simple past is in agreement with Canavan and Quirk: the simple past indicates the occurrence of an action or the existence of a state in the past. *Past* means any point or span earlier than now excluded now.

There are three meanings of the past tense. The most common sense of the past tense is the *event past*, which refers to a single event in the past (e.g., The eruption of Vesuvius *destroyed* Pompeii.) The other two meanings are *state past* (e.g. Archery *was* a popular sport for the Victorian.) and *habitual past* (e.g. In ancient times, the Olympic Games *were held* at the Olympia Southern Greece.). The three meanings of the past tense can

be presented in the following diagram:



In his *Meaning and the English Verb*, Leech (1971:13) argues that the difference between 'state' and 'event' is less important with the past tense than it is with the present tense. In fact, as the past tense normally applies only to completed happenings, everything it refers to is in a sense an 'event', an episode seen as a complete entity. For the simple past tense, there is no clear-cut contrast between 'event' and 'state' uses corresponding to that between the event and state presents. However, there is a distinction to be drawn between the unitary past and the habitual past, describing a repeated event (or state). He also points out that when there are two neighbouring past tense forms, the possible temporal relations between them can be: (1) Past events happening simultaneously (e.g. Her mother *loved* and *worshiped* her.); (2) past events happening in sequence (e.g. She *addressed* and *sealed* the envelope.); and (3) the first verb referring to a later time than the second verb, if this is overtly signalled by a conjunction or adverbial expression, or made clear by our knowledge of history (e.g. A stranger *came* to the house just after our son *was born*.)

According to Leech (1971), aside from the common use of the simple past, past tense can also be used in certain dependent or subordinate clauses to express hypothetical meaning (e.g., If I *had* children, I *would teach* them good manners.).

Leech further mentions two extensions of the normal past meaning. First, because the past tense deals with past events, it is the natural form of the verb to use in narrative, regardless the events narrated are true historical events or the fictional events of a novel. There has grown up a convention of using the past for narrative even when the events described are supposed to take place in the future, such as in science fiction:

> In the year AD 2201, in interplanetary transit vehicle Zeno VII made a routine journey to the moon with thirty people on board.

Here, as Leech (1971) points out, conventionally, future events are viewed as if from a viewpoint even further in the future. Narrative typically assumes, in the imagination, such a retrospective view.

The second special extension of the normal past meaning Leech (1971) mentions is the use of the past tense to refer to the present. We often see this kind of use in some contexts of everyday conversation, in particular, when the interlocutors are presenting their feelings or thoughts. Leech (1971) provides us the following example:

> A: Did you want me?
> B: I hoped you would give me a hand with the painting.

Despite the use of the past tense, the subject of this exchange would probably be the present wishes of speaker B. The effect of the past tense is to make the request indirect, and therefore more polite. Leech (1971) explains the effect: the politer tone here can be taken a hint that the intending or hoping were formulated in past, and that the speaker is not necessarily committed to them in present. Other verbs of similarly usage are *wonder* and *think*.

2.4 Japanese Past/Perfective Marker Ta

The question of whether -ta is a tense marker or an aspect marker has been a controversial one. There are three positions concerning the interpretation of this verb inflection. Traditionally, -ta is viewed as a tense marker (Okuda 1985, Takahashi 1985), while recent research argues that the core meaning of -ta is aspectual, and that the tensal meaning arises from pragmatic context (Kunihiro 1982). Still another perspective is to allow both aspectual and tensal meanings in the inflection (Kamiya 1989; Teramura 1985). Since this paper is not aiming to argue for any of the positions on this issue, we will refer to -ta as a past/perfective marker. In order to give a rough sketch of the use of this past/perfective marker in Japanese, I will summarize Teramura's analysis below.

Teramura (1985) argues that whether -ta takes aspectual meaning or tensal meaning can be clearly determined by the context. There are three cases in which –ta denotes a tensal meaning[9]:

(1) Habitual Past

---

[9] The verb + -ta conjugation in Japanese indicates informal past tense. For example:

□□□□□
kinou ki**ta**.
I came yesterday.

Here, kuru 'to come' is placed in sentence ending form because it is being conjugated to informal past tense, and the sentence ending form of ta is added to it: kuru □ ki + ta □ kita.

The same example in formal past tense:

□□□□□□□
kinou kimashi**ta**.
I came yesterday.

Here we see the sentence ending form for kuru, masu (the dictionary form for a polite verb) and -ta: ki + mashi + ta □ kimashita.

1. Watashi wa mainichi piano wo renshuushi-ta.

I TP everyday piano AC practice-TA

'I used to practice the piano every day.'

2. Sofu wa yoku skii no hanashi wo shi-ta.

My grandfather TP often ski GE story AC tell-TA

'My grandfather often told us about skiing.'

(TP=topic marker, AC=accusative marker, GEN=genitive marker)

In examples 1 and 2, the subjects do not have the habit any more. Therefore in this case -ta is a tense marker.

(2) Fact about the Past

3. Kinoo ano hoteru ni toma-tta.

Yesterday that hotel LO stay-TA

'Yesterday (I) stayed at that hotel.'

4. Shichoo wa kaigi ni okureteki-ta.

The mayor TP meeting LO come late-TA.

'The mayor was late for the meeting.'

(LO = locative marker)

Ta in sentences like 3 and 4 cannot be interpreted as an aspectual marker because it describes the fact that can be reduced to a point in the past.

(3) Perception and Subjective Statements

5. Kaze no oto ga shi-ta.

wind GE sound TP can be heard-TA

‘(I) heard the sound of the wind.’

6. Henna aji ga shi-ta.

Weird taste TP can be tasted-TA

‘(This) tasted weird.’

Apart from past tense, the verb + -ta conjugation also indicates a completed task. Tas in the following sentences show an aspectual distinction, functioning as a perfective marker.

7. Konoko wa segataku na-tta.

This child TP tall become-TA.

‘This child has become tall.’

8. Shichoo wa moo toochaku shi-ta.

The mayor TP already arrive -TA

“The mayor has arrived.”

Tas in the above sentences point to the present situation or focuses on the fact that an event has been realized. This is evidently different from the notion of tense.

Teramura (1985) concluding by re-stating that -ta can serve as both past marker and perfective marker, depending on the context under which they are used.

As we can see, the Japanese past/perfective marker -ta resembles English past tense in

many respects, but it differs in some important ways. For example, the Japanese -ta refers to a particular instance of an action, usually but not always in the past (cf. 'X shita hou ga ii' referring to a future action).

2.5 Le ≠ Past Tense

Despite the strong correlation between the use of –le and past tense, –le really does not signal past tense. We find –le in a lot of non-past perfective sentences.

Le in Imperatives

Most of the time, imperatives do not have –le, for instance:

□□□□□□

Na ni de wai yi

Get you GEN outside clothes

'Get your coat.'

□□□□□

Di gei wo yan.

Pass to I salt

'Pass me the salt.'

However, when there is some urgency about the action taking place, especially when something is to be disposed of or gotten ride of, -le can, be used in imperatives. For example:

□□□□□□□

Yan le nage yaowan.

Swallow PFV that pill

‘Swallow that pill.’

□□□□

He le ta.

Drink PFV it

‘Drink it.’

Le in Future Tense

Le can also be used in sentences indicating future. For instance:

□□□□□□□□□

Mingtian wo jiu kaichu le ta.

Tomorrow I just expel PFV him

‘I will expel him tomorrow.’

Le in Future or Conditional Sequence-of-action Sentences

As we have seen in the last section, -le is sometimes used in future or conditional sequence-of-action sentences. For example:

□□□□□□□

Wo chi le fan zai zou

I eat PFV rice then go

‘I’ll go after I eat.’

□□□□□□□□□□

Ta kan le men, ni jiu jin qu

He open PFV door, you at once in go.

‘If he opens the doors, you go in.’

Where Not to Use -Le

We also see that many sentences expressing past events need not have any –le. For example, –le can be omitted in the presence of another perfectivizing expressions.

□□□□□□□□□

Ta ba pingguo qie cheng liang ban

He –ba apple cut become two half

'He cut the apple into halves.'

Events that are not explicitly bounded also do not take –le, even if refer to past time:

□□□□□□□□□□□□

Zuitian yeli wo meng jian wo de muqin

Yesterday night I dream see my GEN mother

'Last night I dreamed about my mother.'

□□□□□□□

Na hua shi wo mai de.

That flower is I buy PFV

'That flower was bought by me.'

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Ta wen wo ni nianqing de shouhou zai nali nianshu

He ask me you young ASSOC time at where read books

'He asked me where you went to school when you were young.'

Chapter Three Hypotheses

The assumptions adopted by linguists and the analysis and comparison of the Chinese, English and Japanese tense and aspectual systems, combined with observation of my own experience of teaching Chinese as a second language in China and as a foreign language in the UK, led me to hypothesise that:

(1) English, as L2, is a significant (or even more influential) source language of transfer in the acquisition of –le. Where Chinese and English are similar, positive transfer was expected to lead to the production of the correct Chinese form; where they are different, negative transfer was expected to produce error.
(2) Japanese L1/ English L2 speakers are likely to produce more errors than English L1 speakers.

It is contended in psycholinguistic and descriptive L3 literature that linguistic typology is a crucial factor in determining the exact source of language transfer in L3 acquisition (Cenoz, 2000; Hendriks & Prodeau, 2000). However, similarity is not the only cause for L2-L3 influence that has been postulated in the literature. Bentahila (1975) and Rivers (1979) suggest 'recency' as a possible factor, according to which the most recently acquired language is more available for transfer (see also Cenoz, 2001; Hammarberg, 2001; Shanon, 1991; Williams & Hammarberg, 1998). Khaldi (1981) claims that there is 'a positive preference for borrowing from other second languages, and often the less well known they are to the learner the more they prove a source of borrowing'. Shanon (1991) points out that often the most recently acquired, and therefore the weakest, language is the source of cross-linguistic influence. All show that during L3 acquisition the source is not necessarily from L1 and that L2 can be more transferable than L1 for a L3 learner. Nevertheless, as Murphy (2004) points out, this must be approached with caution, since the 'last language effect' may well be a case of transfer-of-training if techniques used when learning the L2 are still active and available during L3 acquisition. Vildomec (1963), for example, suggests that if two languages are learnt in a similar way or in a similar situation, they may influence each

other. Thus, our first proposal is that despite of the typological distance between English and Chinese, the influence of L2 English is salient in acquiring the Chinese perfective marker –le.

Our second hypothesis is inspired by the following ideas:

(1) L3 learners seem to be less rule-governed, can pick up languages with greater facility, but make more overgeneralizations than L2 learners[10] (Zobl 1992). When they can hardly postulate the rules of certain grammatical items in the target language, they tend to assign some functions to them and overgeneralize them. According to Thomas (1988), L3 learners are more aware in terms of metalinguistic knowledge than L2 learners and are more sensitive to linguistic input. As stated before, English is widely used as a metalanguage in current TCSL textbooks. The learners may occasionally see misleading examples in English and overgeneralize them. We will come back to this point in the chapter of pedagogical implications. Also, according to the background questionnaire, the majority of our students admit that they have picked up language through the interaction with native Chinese speakers as well as with other learners who they think are more expert than themselves. Therefore the learners might take the interlocutor's errors, types of deviation from the target language, cross-dialectal variations, or talk-foreign as input.

(2) As the number of languages the learner acquired increases, there is an increasing potential for interference from other available languages (Ahukanna, Lund, & Gentile 1981). In our case, as the Japanese learners have experienced a replay of the same phenomenon in both L1 and L2, namely inflections of verbs expressing past time, there should be a higher probability of transfer. The likely explanation of this is that the learner has a database for the source of transfer in his brain like a mental lexicon, in which there are one native language, L2 interlanguage and some

[10] In this paper, the term learning, acquiring and acquisition are used interchangeably. They all refer to learning language in classroom situations rather than in a naturalistic way. Accordingly, the learners in this paper refer to classroom learners.

knowledge of L3. When acquiring the L3, the learner attempts to seek applicable rules in the database. For example, he may try to find phenomena appearing in L1 or L2 (in our case, in both L1 and L2) similar to those in the L3. If the rules are identical in L1 and L2, the learner is most probably to overgeneralize them and apply them to L3.

(3) Kellerman (1995) claims that because language greatly influences how the speaker views the world, a shift to a new language will imply a change in this conceptual framework. He suggests that while the learner can consciously identify congruent and noncongruent structures between L1 and L2, and judge the degree of markedness of L1 syntactic and lexical features, s/he is less likely to perceive cross-linguistic conceptual differences and will continue to hold an 'unconscious assumption that the way we talk or write about experience is not something that is subject to between-language variation' (1995: 141). The result is that instead of adopting the target language's conceptual perspective and its concomitant linguistic features, L2 learners unconsciously look for L2 linguistic structures that allow them to maintain their L1 perspective. As stated in the previous chapters, the three languages in our case of Japanese L1/English L2 speakers learning Chinese are far from typologically similar. English is predominantly a tense language, whereas Chinese is exclusively an aspect language (c.f. Wang 1943; Gao 1948; Li & Thompson 1981; Norman 1988; Gong 1991). The transfer during L3 acquisition is therefore more of a conceptual one. That is, the learners transfer the concept of past tense into Chinese, which does not have the grammatical category of tense[11], and use the Chinese perfective marker –le to express their concept of tense.

It is also worth pointing out the particularity of our case. That is, the Japanese past/perfective marker -ta resembles English past tense in many (though not all) respects. We shall therefore propose that there may be transfer of the Japanese L1 (both

[11] In Chinese, the concept denoted by tense is indicated by content words like adverbs of time or it is implied by context.

functions and forms) concealed by the English L2 which should be distinguished from the target L2 transfer. This type of transfer is what is termed the transfer of interlanguage[12] (hereafter IL), discovered in Leung's (1998) L3 research carried out on how the learners' Chinese-English IL influences the acquiring of their L3 French (see also Yip 1995). Here the IL L2 indicates an indirect interference of L1 through the channel of L2 to L3 and this interference is found to involve not just merely grammatical interaction but discourse transfer as well. IL transfer is especially relevant since it supports an independent IL research which should be freed from the target grammar constraints. It also implies a deeper definition of transfer, i.e., not merely the transfer of the surface structure, but of underlying functions as well.

Chapter Four Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 Subjects and Tasks

Seventeen intermediate level Japanese students with previous English knowledge taking Chinese language courses at the Beijing Taiying TCSL Institute participated in this research and completed a background questionnaire.

I was interested in exploring how the learners' antecedent linguistic knowledge of English past tense and the correlation they have built (consciously or unconsciously) between events in the past and the appearance of –le affect their acquisition of this Chinese perfective marker. Accordingly, I devised a controlled production task. This task was a sentence completion task. Some of the sentences were adapted from Yang (1998), which was originally on L2 Chinese aspectual markers error correction. I

[12] Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning a language. In language learning, learners' errors are caused by several processes, including: (1) borrowing patterns from the mother tongue (language transfer); (2) extending patterns from the target language, e.g. by analogy (overgeneralization); (3) expressing meaning using the words and grammar which are already known (communication strategy). Since the language which the learner produces using these processes differs from both the mother tongue and the target language, it is sometimes called an interlanguage, or is said to result from the learner's interlanguage system or approximative system (see Selinker 1972; Davies, Criper, & Howatt 1984; Ellis 1985).

modified the task and designed the test items in such a way that it would enable us to look at the use of –le. This task involved the insertion of –le in the correct position in given sentences. There were 15 sentences, containing 23 verbs in total, of which 7 take –le, 15 do not (one of which takes durative marker –zhe, one takes the structural particle –de, and one takes the experiential marker -guo) and one according to personal preference. My intention was to ascertain whether the role of English as L2 is prominent in learning Chinese L3 in terms of aspect. An example is shown below:

□□□□□ □/× □□□□□□□□□□□□ × □□

Zuitian tingdao ( ) zhege hao xiaoxi, wo hen gaoxing ( ).

Yesterday hear (le/×) this good news, I very happy (×).

'Yesterday I was very happy when I heard this good news.'

In addition, subjects were asked to write a 200-character short prose on a topic, an example of which is 'Describe your first three months in China'. This composition task is an elicited written production task, aiming to see whether subjects have acquired the rules of –le in a less controlled and more communicative context. A total of 15 pieces of work altogether was collected, forming our main pool of L3 Chinese production data.

For the purpose of setting up a control group, eleven native-speaker English students were invited to complete the same grammatical exercises. Their performance in the task and the mean score are compared with those of the Japanese students. I will then conduct a T-test to test whether there is the difference between the mean scores is significant.

Other subjects did take part in this experiment, but are not relevant to the purpose of this discussion either because they do not have previous knowledge of English, or their first language is not Japanese.

The questionnaire and task material are reproduced in the Appendix.

4.2 Acquiring Chinese Perfective Marker Le

As the use of –le is rather complicated, in this paper, we will only deal with the verbal aspect suffix -le expressing perfectivity (PFV). We will not deal with the sentence-final -le as current relevant state particle (also known as –le2 or modal particle) or -le3 (other type of sentence-final -le) as some writers (see Guo 1985) have proposed.

It is worth noticing that researchers like Sun (1993) point out that the distinction between –le1, -le2 and –le3 is merely the result of linguistic research, and that the learners do not differentiate them during acquisition. However, according to the linguistic comparison in the previous chapter, we shall propose that the different –les will be influenced by different part of learners' previous language(s). That is, the Japanese past/perfective marker –ta and English past tense will only show observable influence on the acquisition of PFV.

According to Li & Thompson (1981), there are two main types of PFV –le: (1) in past perfective sentences, (2) in non-past perfective sentences as imperative and simple future. Here we speculate that our L3 learners only acquire the first Chinese perfective marker function partially, to a certain extent having been influenced by their previous linguistic knowledge of Japanese past/perfective marker –ta and their experience of learning English past tense.

4.3 Results

I will now examine the results for the sentence completion task and the composition data, comparing the performance of the Japanese native-speakers with the English native-speakers.

Many of those learners who were L1 Japanese speakers did, as predicted, apply the English rule to Chinese in some contexts, leading to the production of the incorrect Chinese form where the two languages differ. The findings from the grammatical exercise and the composition data can basically be classified into two main types:

(1) Misapplication: Applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply;

(2) Nonapplication: Failure to use –le where Chinese does require it.

4.3.1 Misapplication of Le

The learners frequently apply –le for cases where Chinese does not require it. Now I will categorize the errors found in our data and analyze them in turn.

Negative Sentences

Unlike in English past tense, the aspectual marker -le does not occur in negative sentences. Instead, mei (you) is placed before the main verb. For example, to negate the sentence □□□□□□□(Ta mai le na ben shu. 'He bought that book.'), we put mei (you) precede the verb mai 'to buy' without the presence of –le:

Ta mei(you) mai na ben shu.
He didn't buy that book.

According to Li & Thompson, the reason that –le is not used in the negative form is that 'the meaning of negative sentences – that some event does not take place or that some state of affairs does not obtain – is incompatible with the meaning of –le, which is to signal a bounded event. An event that does not occur, of course, cannot in general be bounded' (1981: 186).

As a result of the interacting effect of English past tense and the Japanese past/perfective marker –ta, we suspect that our subjects might actually treat –le as a

past tense marker and use it in negative sentences which signal past time.

In the grammatical exercise:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□×□□□□□□□

Yesterday, I buy (le) a red car. I not buy (×) that blue ASSOC

'Yesterday, I *bought* a red car. I *didn't buy* that blue one.'

All seventeen subjects produced correct forms in the first positive sentence by putting a –le after the verb mai 'to buy', while fifteen out of 17 students used –le in the second negative sentence. The high error rate might be because of the assimilative effect of the first clause. It would have been interesting if there were two negative sentences in the grammatical exercise: one contains only a negative clause; the other contains a positive clause and a negative one. So that we could be more certain whether the first clause matters and to what extend it matters.

We find similar results in our composition data. Our Japanese learners indeed apply –le in negative sentences as shown in the following examples:

□□□□□*□□□□□□□□□□□

Ni mei xie qingchu *le zhege hanzi, wo kan bu dong.

You mei (to negate) write clear *le this Chinese character, I see no undertand

'You didn't write that character clearly. I can't read it.'

□□□*□□□□□

Wo mei kan *le ne ben shu

I mei read *le that CL book

'I didn't read that book.'

□□□□□□□□□□*□□□□

Diyi xueqi women hai mei xuexi le hanzi

First semester we still mei learn *le Chinese character

‘We didn't learn characters in the first semester.’

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Na tian, wo he nvpengyou qu Wudaokou kan dianying, keshi wo mei dai *le yanjing.

That day, I and girlfriend go Wudaokou watch film, but I mei wear *le glasses.

‘That day, my girlfriend and I went to Wudaokou to see a film. But I didn't wear my glasses.’

Out of all the 92 sentences containing the perfective –le composed by 15 of our subjects, there were 8 negative sentences. Compared to the total number of 11 negative sentences expressing past time, the accuracy rate is rather low. The three correct forms were produced by the two subjects who also produced correct form in the sentence completion task.

As for the control group, the 11 English L1 speakers learning Chinese, the result was very similar to that of the experimental group: Ten produced correct forms in the positive sentences, and two produced correct forms in the negative sentences.

Habitual Events

The perfective –le is also incompatible with habitual events. However, one meaning of English past tense is the habitual past. The subjects, as we predicted, transferred this concept into Chinese and applied –le in our insertion task when the sentence refers to a repeated event in the past:

□□□□□□□□□□×□□□□

Shangge yue, ta yizhi duanlian (×) shenti.

Previous month 3sg at all times exercise (×) body.

‘He kept training last month.’

Here, yizhi ‘at all times’ indicates the consistency of the event. Thus,–le is not required. However, thirteen out of 17 subjects produced incorrect forms in the above sentence; eight out of the 11 native English speaking learners produced incorrect forms. Again, we attribute this to the conceptual transfer from English to Chinese. The explicit time phrase shange yue ‘last month’ signals the past time. The subjects applied the rules of English past tense here. Corresponding errors were found in the in the compositions:

□□□□□□□□*□□□□□□□□□□

Wo zai riben changchang kanjian *le zhongguo gudaide gongyipin.

I in Japan often see *PFV China ancient arts

‘I often saw Chinese arts in Japan.’

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□*□□□□

Lai zhongguo yihou, women yizhi zai yige ban xuexi *le hanyu.

Come China after we at all times at one class learn *PFV Chinese

‘After coming to China, we always leanrt Chinese in the same class.’

□□□□□□□*□□□□□□

Kaishi wo meitian fuxi *le liangge zhongtou.

Beginning I every day review *PFV two hour

‘in the beginning, I reviewed two hours every day.’

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□*□□

Yinwei wo dui Bejing de qihou bu qiguan, na yi nian, wo changchaneg bing *le.

Because I to Beijing GEN climate not custom, that one year, I always ill *PFV

‘Because I wasn't used to Beijing’s climate, I was always ill that year.’

In the composition data, seven of 92 sentences containing the perfective –le signal

habitual past. Four past habitual sentences had the correct forms.

Main Verb □

When □ *you* 'to have' is used as the main verb of a sentence, the aspectual marker □ -le is not used with them.

□□□□*□□□□□□□□

qunian wo you *le yi liang hen hao de che

Last year I have *PFV a very good car

'Last year I had a very good car.'

Eleven out of 17 subjects used –le after the verb you 'to have'. It is probably because in English past tense the verb 'to have' has its past form – had. When the time phrase qunian 'last year' triggered the conceptual transfer, the students took –le as a past tense suffix and put it after the verb. Eight students from the control group produced incorrect forms.

Let's have a look at some of the sentences composed by the Japanese students:

□□*□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Wo you *le jihui gen zhongguo yisheng yiqi gongzuo, geichang gaoxing.

I have *PFV chance with Chinese doctors together work very happy

'I had a chance to work with Chinese doctors. I was very happy.'

□□□□□□□□*□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Zhongjiujie, women ban you *le yi ge wanhui, biede ban de xuesheng ye lai canjia le.

Mid-autumn Day our class have *PFV a party other class student also come participate PFV

'On Mid-autumn Day, we held a party in our class. Students from other classes came and joined us.'

There were four sentences with you as the main verb signalling past time. All of them mistakenly took the perfective –le.

Complement of Degree Constructions

The aspectual marker -le is not used in the complement of degree construction[13]. For example in our sentence completion task:

□□□□ □ □□□□□□□□□ □ □□□□□

Ta huida (le) nage wenti, huida (de) hen zhengque.
He answer (le) that question, answer (de) very correct.
'He correctly answered that question.'

Instead of using the perfective –le after the second verb huida 'to answer', a structural particle –de should be used in the complement of degree construction. This construction serves to perform the same function the –le does, namely, to signal that the event is to be viewed as a complete whole.

In the insertion task, fourteen out of 17 subjects put a –le after the first huida 'to answer', which is the correct form; while only two subjects put a –de after the second huida 'to answer'. It is interesting that another subject did not put anything after that verb. The possible explanation of the low accuracy rate for the second blank is that it might influenced by the first verb as what happened in the case of negative forms.

[13] Li & Thompson (1981) give a more broad term perfectivizing expression, including *directional phrases*, *locative phrases*, *indirect object phrases*, which put boundaries on the event by specifying their spatial limits, and *stative phrases* which bounds the event by naming the extent to which is happened. The so-called stative phrases is termed the *complement of degree* in Chinese linguistics literature.

When interviewed the student who did not put anything after the second huida ‘to answer’, she reported that she had wanted to put both –de and –le, but she felt –le was not compatible with –de phonetically. This can be seen as a reflection of the development of student’s L3 competence, or ‘language feeling’ as called by laymen. This kind of error is seldom found in the composition data. Only three incorrect sentences of this kind are found. Actually, there were the only sentences containing in the complement of degree constructions. Possibly, it is because the learners find this construction difficult to handle. In the third sentence, the subject used both –de and –le. We think it is because he remembered the rules of the complement of degree constructions, but as a result of the conceptual transfer of the English past tense, he still used –le within the same sentences.

□□□□□*□□□□

zuo wan ta fan zuo *le hen hao.

Last night he food make *PFV very good

‘Last night he cooked very well.’

□□□□□□□□*□□□□□□

Nage gushi laishi jiang *le hen youyisi.

That story teacher tell *PFV very interesting

‘The teacher told us a very interesting story.’

The numbers of students who produced errors in the control groups were 1/11 and 9/11 respectively in the first and the second clause.

Xinli Dongzuo Verbs

In Mandarin Chinese, verbs referring to ability (neng, hui, keyi), possibility (yao), intention (e.g. dasuan, ‘to plan’), wish (e.g. xiwang, panwang, to wish), sensation (e.g. ganjue, juede, to feel), determination (e.g. juexin, to decide) and judgement after

observation (e.g. renwei, yiwei, to think) belong to the same category – xili dongzuo 'inner-heart action' verbs[14]. These verbs can not take –le. However, in English all these verbs have their past form. When the learner transfers the concept of past tense from L2 English to L3 Chinese, he/she are very likely to use -le after xili dongzuo verbs. The result of the insertion task confirmed our thought:

□□□□□□100 □□□□□□□×□□□

Mali kao (le) 100 Fen. I envy (×) her.

Mary examine (le) 100 Fen. I envy (×) her

'Mary got 100% in the exam. I envied her.'

Sixteen out of 17 subjects produced correct forms in the first sentence. produced correct forms in the second. Apart from the assimilative effect of the first sentence, possibly, the broadness of the xinli dongzuo 'inner-heart action' verb category also attributes to the low accuracy rate. Four in the control group produced correct forms.

In the 15 compositions we collected from our 17 subjects, there were 15 sentences about intentions, plans, feeling, etc.. All of them took the perfective –le and thus were the incorrect forms. For example,

□□□□□□*□□□□□

Wo hen zao jiu dasuan *le lai zhongguo.

I very early already plan * PFV come China

'I planned to come to China long ago.'

□□□□*□□□□□□□

Tamen renwei *le wo shi zhongguoren.

[14] In Chinese linguistics literature, verbs referring to ability, wish or possibility are sometimes subdivided and known as optative verbs.

They think *PFV I am Chinese

'They thought that I was Chinese.'

Direct and Indirect Speech

The aspectual marker -le is not used for those verbs which indicate direct and indirect speech.

(1) □□□□□*□□□□□□

ta shangge yue shuo *le yao lai kan wo.

He last month say *PFV want come see me

'He said last month that he would like to visit me.'

(2) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□*□□"□□□□!"

Zhan zai changcheng jiao xiao, women sange ren tongshi shuo *le: "tai xiongwei le!"

Stand at the Great Wall foot under, we three spontaneously say (×): 'Too wonderful!'

'Standing at the foot of the Great Wall, three of us said together, 'Great!'

As the rule of not using –le in the verb indicates direct or indirect speech is quite straightforward, only 7 out of 17 learners produced errors in (1), and 4 out of 17 produced errors in (2). Within the 4 subjects who produced incorrect forms in (2), two of them used -le in (1) as well. Interesting enough, according to the background questionnaire, one of the two subjects has an Australian boyfriend, and communicates with him in English after class. For all the learners who produced errors in these two sentences, the possible explanation could be that they transferred the English past time into Chinese, and ignored the constraints of using –le. For the particular subject who assumedly uses more English than other Japanese learners, there might be a stronger influence from English as L2. But what does the difference between the numbers of

errors indicate? Why there were more subjects making mistakes in (1) than in (2)? Possibly, it is because that in Chinese the rules concerning the omissions of the subject of the indirect speech are rather complicated. For example, in (1) the subject of the indirect speech ta 'he' is omitted. This might have caused difficulties for the students to identify the nature of the object, and therefore produced more incorrect forms.

In the composition data, we found similar tendency - our subjects rarely use indirect speech as verbal objects. We propose that it is because when the learners are still on a relatively low level, they tend to keep the direct speech to avoid the subject omission. While using direct speech as objects of verbs indicating past time, they often use –le where Chinese does not require. The following two examples are from the composition data:

□□□□□□□□*□□"□□□□"

Wo dui nage fuwuyuan shuo *le: "xiexie ni!"

I to that waiter say *PFV: "thank you!"

'I said to that waiter, "Thank you!"'

□□□□□□□□□□*□□"□□□□□□□□□□"

Women zai huoche xiabian xiang ta han *le: "yiding yao gei women xie xin a!"

We at train under to her shout *PVT : "make sure will to us write letter ah!"

'We shouted to her beside the train, "Don't forgot to write to us!"'

In the control group, 3 produced incorrect forms in (1) and 2 in (2).

Implying Change of Situation

In Chinese, most descriptive adjectives can function as verbs without using verb to be. For example, in the sentence □□□ ta hen gao ‘He (is) very tall’, gao functions as the main verb without the presence of shi ‘to be’. When perfective –le is used after those verbalized adjectives, most often at the end of a sentence (c.f. sentence final -le), it implies a change of situation or that something is no longer in the same state as it was. For example, the following example can each have two interpretations, depending on whether the adjective describes a process or a state:

□□□□□□

Ta pang le yidian.

3sg thin PFV a little

b. discussing how a friend has changed since last visit

c. talking about candidates for a football team

However, in English descriptive adjectives are used after the verb to be. When the event happened in the past, the verb to be is used in its past form was or were. Because of the transfer of English past tense to Chinese, our subjects produced incorrect forms in the sentence completion task by using a –le after the adjective gaoxing ‘happy’:

….□□□□□*□□

wo hen gaoxing *le.

I very happy *PFV.

Obviously, the English counterpart of this sentence is ‘I was very happy’. However, by employing a –le after gaoxing ‘happy’, the sentence means a lot more than merely the feeling of being happy. Eleven out of 17 subjects produced errors in this case. We found quite a few examples in those students’ compositions:

□□□□□□*□□

Junko pao de hen kuai *le.

Junko run structural-particle very fast *PFV.

'Junko ran very fast.'

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Guoqingjie na tian, shangdian li ren feichang duo *le.

National Day that day, store in people very many *PFV.

'On National Day, there were a lot of people in stores.'

As for the first half of the sentence in the sentence completion task:

□□□□□ □/× □□□□□□□…

Yesterday hear (le/×) this good news, …

'Yesterday when I heard this good news...'

Whether to use –le or not here much depends on personal preference. Surprisingly, all our subjects used –le. In the composition data, we found similar result. That is, students tend to use –le where it can be used but is not necessarily required. Zhao's (1996) longitudinal study on an English L1 speaker learning Chinese shows that with his knowledge of Chinese increased, the subject used fewer –le where it is not necessarily required. The rate dropped from 81% to 50% and then to 16%. We predict that the same tendency will appear on our subjects when they move to higher levels.

Naming the Events

The sentence in the insertion task is:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□×□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Zuotian zaoshang, wo zai bowuguan menkou deng (×) Mike, deng (le) 30 fenzhong.

Yesterday morning, I at museum door wait (×) Mike, wait (le) 30 minutes.
'Last night, I waited for Mike at the entrance of the museum for thirty minutes.'

The first mention of deng 'wait' is not presented as an event viewed in its entirely but simply names the event; it cannot be take –le. The second mention of the verb is bounded by a phrase the amount of time the waiting took. So –le is required here. It is actually a good illustration of the contrast between just naming an event and present it as a unified whole by quantifying it.

As we predicted, most subjects used –le in both of the cases. Only two students produced the correct form. It is possibly because our subjects' Chinese proficiency is not yet adequate to distinguish naming of the event and presenting it as a unified whole, especially when they produce Chinese discourse by themselves, they tend to use –le when just naming an event. For example:

□□□□□□□*□□□□□□□*□□□□□□□□

Ta zuotian xiawu da qiu *le, wanshang hai da qui *le. Zenme neng bu lei?
3sg yesterday afternoon play ball *PFV, night also play ball *PFV. How can not tired?
'Yesterday he played ball in the afternoon and in the evening. No wonder he was tired.'

As for the English native speakers, 2 of them produced the correct forms.

Other Aspectual Markers and Structures

As we have seen in the introduction of the perfective marker –le, it does not occur with verbs denoting ongoing actions. In other words, perfective –le is incompatible with the durative aspect markers -zai and – zhe because the meaning of perfective (bounded) and durative (unbounded) aspect are incompatible. Perfective –le is also incompatible

with the experiential aspect suffix –guo.

In the sentence completion task (see Appendix), five out of 17 subjects produced correct forms in (10). Three of them put the durative –zhe; two put a ×. As for (11), only four subjects correctly used the experiential –guo.

In the composition data, we found similar errors. Apart from them, we also found some students mistook –le for the shi…de… structure. For example,

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□*□□

Wo baba mama shi dongjing ren, danshi wo zai meiguo sheng *le.

My dad mom are Tokyo people, but I in Osaka born *le.

'My dad and mom are from Tokyo. But I was born in Osaka.'

Here instead of using –le, a shi…de… structure is required, i.e. □□□□□□□□Wo shi zai danban sheng de. (I shi in Osaka sheng de.).

Moreover, we found that where either –le or another aspect marker can be used, our subjects tend to use –le.

Fixed Phrases

The aspectual marker –le is not used when the sentence contains the following fixed phrases.

If adverb gang or its duplicated form ganggang 'just' is used before the verb, -le is not required in the sentence. Below is one of the errors we found in students' composition:

□□□□□□*□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Yinwei wo ganggang dao *le Beijing, suoyi hen xiang like qu kankan Tian'anmen.
Because I just arrive *PFV Beijing so very want like go see Tian'anmen
'Because I just came to Beijing, I really wanted to visit Tian'anmen.'

Also, if the sentence contains youshi, youshihou, you de shi hou 'sometimes', the verb does not take –le. If the sentence contains yiqian, 'before…', the verb also does not take –le.

The subjects in general had high accuracy rates with respect to the perfective marker –le in the sentence completion task (12) to (14). This might be a case of correct production of the target form due to memorizing, which masks the incomplete internalization of the target rule.

Whether to use –le or not depends largely on context, discourse, genre and even the idiosyncratic choice. An important character of the Chinese language is its emphasis on the meaning. Therefore, as long as the perfectitivy is expressed in the context, the perfective marker –le is not required. The errors of –le occur not only in individual sentences, even more in discourse. The composition data is our experiment is therefore of great importance.

4.3.2 Nonapplication of Le

The learners sometimes fail to use –le where Chinese does require it. This kind of error, however, is of the lowest frequency among others. In the sentence completion task (15), of the 17 subjects who were L1 Japanese speakers, only three failed to use –le after the verb biaoxian 'to manifest', and therefore produced the incorrect Chinese form by not using –le. The same type of results occurred among the English L1 students. Two out of 11 produced the incorrect form. As discussed previously, learners tend to overuse –le. In (15), according to the context, the event is being viewed in its entirety, thus the

verb should be followed by a –le to express the perfectivity. But why the students produced incorrect forms in this cases? Possibly, it is because in this sentence, there is not any phrase to signal explicitly the past time. This obviously did not fit the learner's own conception of what the target grammar should be, the co-occurrence of past time and –le.

We have found more errors of this kind in the composition data than in the insertion task, even in sentences which contain overt time phrases such as qunian 'last year' and natian 'that day':

□□ 9 □ 5 □□□□□*□□□□□□□□□□

Qunian 9 yue 5 hao, wo dao (*le) zhonguo de shoudu Beijing.
Last year 9 month 5 day, I arrived (*le) China GEN capital Beijing.
'On 5th September last year, I arrived at Beijing, the capital of China.'

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□*□□[15]□□□□□□

Qunian hanjia wo he lizi qu xianggang, nail de tianqi
bi Beijing nuanhe.
Last year winter vacation, I and Reiko go Hongkong, there GEN weather
compared to Beijing warm.
'During the winter vacation last year, Reiko and I went to Hongkong. It was warmer than Beijing.'

Seven out of 17 Japanese L1/English L2 learners produced incorrect sentences in their compositions, including the three mentioned above. The possible explanation for this kind of errors is:

(1) The process of lexical transfer distinguishes between content and function words. Learners with low foreign language proficiency tend to allocate most of their

[15] Instead of using □□ tianqi 'weather', □□ qihou 'climte' should be used here.

conscious attention to meaning and focuses more on content words. This leads to more errors with function words. In our research, all the subjects are lower-intermediate level students. The newly introduced aspect marker -le[16] has not been fully internalized. Therefore, from time to time, they pay more attention to how to convey the meaning than to this function word. It would have been interesting to have conducted an oral exercise or interview, talking about past experience for example, in order to see whether the learners would have produced more errors in the situation which is less controlled while demands more communicational strategies. This type of error is commonly found in L3 Chinese and can be treated as a possible indicator of active cognitive functioning during L3 language processing. It shows the highly functional and communicative nature of L3 learning and production.

(2) Ringbom (1986) suggests that lexical transfer, which would involve function words, tends to be more L2-based. De Angelis and Selinker (2001) agree that L2 transfer of form appears frequently in their data. Hammarberg (2001) also finds that while his subject consciously draws on her L1 English for metalinguistic comments, elicitations, and intentional incorporation of L1 lexical items to fill a knowledge gap during her L3 Swedish production, she uses L2 German in her unintended language switches which usually involve short function words. This L2 function word transfer is facilitated by typological closeness, as shown by Cenoz (2001), who finds her subjects transfer seven times as many function words from Spanish as from Basque when speaking English. In our case, as English and Chinese are typologically distant, the L2 function word (the English past tense suffix -ed[17]) is hardly ever morphologically or phonologically adapted to the L3 Chinese, possibly the learners might sometimes avoid the function word (or use a zero function word) during transferring.

(3) For some of the students, they might have already noticed some of the cooccurrence restrictions of the perfective –le. But they may not have mastered the

[16] Here –le is categorized into function words.
[17] Here we used the suffix –ed to represent English past tense, but this does not mean that we deny the irregular forms in English past tense.

nature of –le and its rules of application, so when they choose to take a cautious move. That is, to avoid using –le even where it is required, and overgeneralize it. In light of this, this type of error can be seen as a type of intralingual error.

4.3.3 Other Errors

In the composition data, we also found some other types of errors made by the Japanese L1/English L2 speakers learning Chinese. Some of the errors are found among learners with divergent L1 backgrounds; some are errors uniquely made by Japanese students.

In Chinese, the perfective –le is seldom found with forms of resultative verb compounds. For example:

□□□□□□

Wo kan bu jian ni.

I look no see you.

'I couldn't see you.'

Here the form kan …jian 'tolook … to see' already refers to a event viewed in its entirely, -le is redundant[18].

In students' compositions, we found incorrect forms containing both resultative verb compounds and perfective –le. For example:

[18] Sometimes we do use –le with resultative verb compounds. But the use is limited to verbs with inherent bounded meaning. That is, verbs which have their end points built into their meaning, such as si 'to die', wang 'to forget', guan 'to shut', chi 'to eat', he 'to drink', fang 'to release', mai 'to sell', sha 'to kill', huai 'to returen', etc.. The meaning of –le in those sentences are similar to the resultative verb ending –diao 'off' (e.g □□□□Guan diao ta 'turn it off').

□□□□□□□□□□□□□*□□□□□□□□

Wo zou jin tade fangjian de shihou, kanjian *le ta zhengzai da dianhua.

I walk into her room de time, see *PFV she just make telephone.

'When I walked into her room, I saw that she was on the phone.'

In the kan-jian 'to see' compounds already serves to refer to expresse perfectivity. The perfective –le is no needed. But the learner still used –le. It can be traced back to the L1 Japanese: the Japanese past/perfective marker –ta indicates result.

Another type of error we found in the composition data is caused by the same cross-linguistic difference. That is, the learners sometimes use –le when the verb needs take an appropriate resultative verb ending. For example:

□□□□□□□□*□□□□□

San nian yihou, wo you jian *le Zhang laozhi.

Three year after, I again see *PFV Zhang teacher.

'I saw teacher Zhang again three years later'.

In the above sentence, the resultative verb ending –dao 'to' is required. As a result of the influence of Japanese, the learner mistook the conditions of using –ta for those of –le, and applied –le after the verb.

In addition, the composition data also indicates that most of our subjects haven't developed the use of -le in future tense, despite the fact that in the Japanese past/perfective marker –ta can refer to future as we have stated in the previous chapter. In sentences signaling future time and requiring a -le, most of our subjects chose alternative ways of expressing similar ideas. For example:

□□□□□□---□□---□□□□

Mingtian women chi fan ---yihou--- zai tan.

Tomorrow we eat rice---after--- again talk.

'We will talk (about this) tomorrow after diner.'

In the above sentence, instead of putting a –le after the verb chi 'to eat', the learner used the adverb yihou 'after' after the verb phrase chi fan 'eat rice' and changed it from a verb phrase to a adverb phrase.

□□□□□□□---□----□□□□□□□

Zhege zhoumo wo xiang zuo ---wan--- zuoye zai qu ni jia.

This weekend I want do ---up--- homework then go your home.

'This weekend, I would like to finish my homework first and then go to yours.'

Here, the learner used the resultative verb ending –wan 'up' rather than the perfective –le after the verb zuo 'to do'.

4.3.4 Summary

The following is a brief summary of the results of the two elicited written production tasks: the sentence completion task and the compositions.

Table 1

Accuracy Rates in Sentence Completion Task

	Accuracy Rate: L3 Inter's Chinese (n=17)	**Accuracy Rate: English NS Control (n=11)**

In Negative Sentences	**11.76%**	**18.18%**
With Habitual Events	**23.53%**	**27.27%**
Sentence with You as the Main Verb	**35.29%**	**27.27%**
In the Complement of Degree Constructions	**17.65%**	**18.18%**
Xinli Dongzuo Verbs	**29.42%**	**36.36%**
Direct and Indirect Speech	**67.65%**	**72.73%**
Implying Change of Situation	**35.29%**	**36.36%**
Naming the Event	**11.76%**	**18.18%**
Mistaken –Le with Other Aspectual Markers and Structures	**29.41%**	**36.36%**
Fixed Phrases	**70.59%**	**72.73%**
Where –le can be used but is not necessarily required[19]	**52.94%**	**54.55%**
Other conditions when the use of English past tense overlaps that of the perfective –le	**70.59%**	**72.73%**

Table 1 above indicates that subjects have high accuracy rates where the Chinese aspectual marker –le and English past tense are similar; the subjects produce more errors where they are different. No significant difference was found in the error rates in

[19] Here the rate is not the accuracy rate but the rate use rate.

the sentence completion task between the experimental group and the control group.

Table 2

Comparison of the Mean Percentages of Error Rate in Composition and Sentence Completion Task (L3 Inter's Chinese, n=17)

	No. of obligatory Contexts	**Errors (%)**
Composition	**92**	**59.79%**
Sentence Completion Task	**23 × 17**	**47.66%**

As we can observe from the Table 2 above, subjects' performance is different between the composition and sentence completion task. The error rate is higher when the subjects were in controlled conditions.

Chapter Five Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication

5.1 Explanations

The results showed no significant difference between the experimental group (Japanese L1/English L2 speakers learning Chinese) and the controls (English L1 speakers learning Chinese) with respect to the perfective marker –le. However, this does not mean that the salient influence of English in the process of English L2

speakers (Japanese speakers in our case) learning Chinese as L3 can be denied.

First, the errors discussed above could be caused by conceptual transfer of the past tense from English L2. However, because of the resemblances between the Japanese past/perfective marker -ta and English past tense, this could also be due to the influence of the learners L1 Japanese and/or the L2 interlanguage. It is difficult to distinguish between the three influences. If both of the experimental group and the control group experience full transfer from the native language, the interacting effect on the Japanese learners can hardly be observed[20].

In addition, we should try to find out the possible oversights of our experiment:

(1) One relevant factor we should have paid more attention in our research is Kellerman's (1983) *psychotypology*, which considers language transfer as a conscious process based on the learner's perception of language typology between the source language and the target language and his/her linguistic awareness of particular features. That is, if the two languages are perceived as similar, transfer will more likely occur, whereas a perceived dissimilarity will tend to lead to avoidance.

In our case of acquisition of the perfective –le in L3 Chinese, the question would be which language the learner decides to be the source of transfer, whether there is more L1 (Japanese) influence or L2 (English) influence. As the background questionnaire results showed, over 90% of the students regarded L1 Japanese to be closer to L3 Chinese. Japanese, though typologically distant from Chinese, have many loanwords from Chinese and shares many characters with Chinese[21]. This

[20] Although it is difficult to trace the source of the influence since it could be found in both L1, L2 and L2 interlanguage, the phenomenon could be explained by cognitive factors which may play a role in acquiring of the perfective marker –le.

[21] Researchers like Yushiyo (1985) point out that already knowing Chinese characters should not be sneezed at in

makes most Japanese students feel that their language is close to Chinese and that they have an advantage in learning Chinese. This kind of feeling might lead them to transfer more from their native language than from L2 English. However, about 55% students admitted that they were always influenced by English in Chinese production, mainly because of the English notes and explanations in textbooks and the teacher's instruction, and sometimes the daily use of English.

(2) This study is a limited survey conducted with a small sample. A larger sample in a longitudinal study could provide more information on the influence of L1 (Japanese) and L2 (English) on the acquisition of Chinese at different developmental stages. Further investigation on subjects with different L1s and identical L2 (English) learning Chinese as L3 could give us a better understanding of the multilingual mind, which will benefit multilingual education.

(3) As a preliminary attempt to explore how English as L2 operates in the process of learning Chinese as L3, some of the factors affecting language transfer have not been explored sufficiently in the our research, for example age[22], educational background[23], linguistic background of the control group[24], and therefore merit

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the process of Japanese speakers acquiring Chinese. But the answer to whether it is an advantage or a disadvantage (e.g., false friends) is left open.

[22] The factor of age is largely ignored in current studies of L3 acquisition. Some studies (e.g. Cenoz 2001) address it to a certain extent, but the scope of them is limited to children L3 learners. Teaching Chinese as a Second Language to a large extent is teaching adult foreigners Chinese. Further study on subjects who began learning the L3 as adults will give a clearer indication of age-related differences in L3 acquisition and benefit TSCL.

[23] Having the subjects' educational background unmentioned is a flaw in our study. Odlin (1989) includes educational background and literacy as a factor in language transfer. That is, learners with highly developed language skills in their L1 will most likely find that these skills facilitate L2 acquisition. This factor is rarely considered in L3 acquisition literature, mainly because the subjects of most studies are university students as subjects. Much of the research on multilingualism comparing speakers of different social and educational backgrounds is done from a sociolinguistic rather than a psycholinguistic perspective. Future L3 acquisition research needs to take educational background into account since it directly relates to metalinguistic awareness.

[24] Most native speakers of English have certain knowledge of some European languages such as French, German, and Spanish. In our research, we did not take the potential influence of these languages into account. Aside from this, although all the students in the experimental group and the control group were from the same level, their actual proficiency of Chinese varies.

further study.

5.2 Pedagogical Implication

Learning to control –le is one of the most difficult tasks facing non-native Chinese speakers attempting to master Chinese[25], partly because those languages have no feature quite like it. This task is further complicated by an equally elusive sentence-final le. One pedagogical implication of our research is to find out the influence of English as L2 in the process of acquiring Chinese as L3 in terms of the perfective marker -le, and accordingly to make better use of English as metalanguage in TCSL textbooks. After all, despite all the arguments for and against textbook-based teaching, a textbook is important in language teaching as it offers linguistic, cultural and methodological support for teachers and learners.

(1) Characterizing –le as expressing completion is a common fault among TCSL textbooks. For example, *Elementary Chinese* (Part II) (1972) introduces –le as a suffix which 'shows only the completion of an action'; in *Han Yu Jiao Cheng* (Yang 2002), -le is said to indicate 'an act is completed'. If we continue to use Li & Thompson's term of *boundedness*, typically, of course, a bounded action is also complete. But –le need not necessarily signal completed action. For example:

□□□□□□□□

Zhuo shang fang le yi ben shu.
Table above put PFV one Measure-word book.
'On the table puts a book.'

Here, the English translation accurately depicts that the verb fang 'to put' describes a stative event concerning the book instead of signalling an action. The event described

[25] According to the background questionnaire, –le (75%) was voted as the second most difficult target grammar item after ba construction (85%).

by the sentence is bounded by the quantifying phrase yi ben shu ‘a book’, and –le is present in this sentence. However, there is no sense of completion being conveyed by the sentence.

Li & Thompson (1981) provide another example clearly showing that –le does not mean completion:

□□□□□□□□□

Ta pao le liang ge zhongtou le.
He run PFV two Measure-word hour CRS.
‘He has run for two hours.’

* CRS: Currently Relevant State utterances must end in -le.

Here, both the perfective –le and the sentence final –le occur, together with the time phrase liang ge zhongtou ‘two hours’, serving to bound the event. The starting point of the action pao ‘to run’ occurs before the time of speech, but the end point of the action is left open. Only the total context in which this sentence occurs can determine what is the precise end point of the action. Obviously, if –le were to signal completed action, sentences such as above could not be indeterminate with regard to the end point of the action denoted by the verb.

(2) As shown in the data analysis chapter, the perfective –le is often mistaken for other aspectual markers (e.g. *-zhe* indicating the continuous aspect of an action, *-zai* indicating the progressive aspect of an action, *-guo* indicating the experiential aspect of an action), other types of sentence such as ‘…shi…de’, and the structural particles –de. It will be helpful for TCSL textbooks to have one or two chapters which are especially devoted to the introduction of the Chinese aspect system. The students can therefore have a basic but thorough idea of what the different aspectual markers are and their main functions. Also, where the functions of different particles overlap, we can

introduce them in parallel, compare them and stress the differences.

(3) Not only the teachers but also the textbooks need to emphasize that the category of aspect is very different from that of tense, and that the Chinese language has no markers of tense[26]. That is, the Chinese language does not use verb affixes to signal the relation between the time the situation occurs and the time situation is brought up in speech. In Chinese, the time is indicated by the time phrases and the contexts. By emphasizing the above two points, we can, hopefully, decrease the learners' attempt to transfer the concept of the tense system into Chinese.

(4) As for the sequence of TCSL textbooks, it helps if the aspectual markers appear early in textbooks. For most of the current TCSL textbooks, the chapters about aspectual markers are in the last few chapters. According to the time schedule of most TCSL institutes in China, four hours of grammar instruction per week, this means that the students do not have a change to know the existence of such the aspectual markers until the end of the first semester, let alone learning them systematically. The aspectual markers are highly frequent in Chinese and they are one of the most important characters of the Chinese language. There is an interesting analogy between Chinese and Chinese cuisine: To teach Chinese without introducing –le is like to teaching how to cook Chinese food without introducing the use of soya sauce (Ma 1985). Therefore, the earlier they are introduced in the textbooks, the more practice the students can get. And the increasing variety of the sentences and the complexity of the contents of the textbooks can hopefully increase the learners' interest in learning Chinese.

(5) Although most TCSL teachers claim that they have pointed out to the students and

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[26] In Kan's (1998) *Colloquial Chinese*, a widely used TCSL textbook in the UK, she defines –le as a 'past particle', which when 'added after some verbs' indicating 'an event happened in the past, especially when a time related phrase such as zuotian "yesterday" is used'. Personally, I think this explanation is rather misleading. First, -le does not signal past tense. It also disregards the fact that –le can be used in sentences indicating future.

have re-emphasized that the Chinese –le does not mean past tense, it seems rather inefficient. We should therefore re-consider the way of introducing this perfective marker in TCSL textbook in order to direct teachers' activities. In most TCSL textbooks, the examples of –le are sentences about past-time events with their English translations as past tense. For example, in *Chinese Grammar* (http://www.csulb.edu/~txie/online.htm) the perfective –le is introduced as below:

> The particle '□' is suffixed to a verb to emphasize a completed action. For example:
>
> □□□□□□□I finished reading a book.
>
> □□□□He left.

So it is not surprising at all that the learner builds a correlation between -le and past tense. Therefore, we should probably first introduce the conditions of using -le which are most distinct from those of English past tense in order to reduce the preoccupation the students might otherwise have developed. Then we can gradually talk about the similarities between this aspect marker and past tense. As Li & Thompson suggested, 'if we begin by abandoning any attempt to equate –le with a grammatical category such as tense in English, concentrating instead on trying to grasp the semantic notions of perfectivity and boundedness, we will be making a good head start in this challenging task' (1981: 215). However, this should be approached with caution, as after all language teachers and language learners are not linguists, terms such as 'perfectitivity' and 'boundedness' could be even more confusing than the grammar item itself. In fact, rather than going out of their way to explain linguist terminologies, textbooks and teachers can choose to point out where not to use –le (e.g. *Grammar Index* by Oxford University). How to use English more efficiently as a metalanguage in TCSL textbooks is a very promising topic. The research on just one grammatical item is far from enough. We therefore call for further research in this field.

(6) Another problem of most TCSL textbooks concerning the instruction of –le is that

they explain the use of -le once and for all. The students can remember some of the dos and don'ts in the short run, and they sometimes do perform well in examinations. However, to expect the learner to internalize such complicated rules of -le in a short time is not practical. Thus, we should review the rules in the classes of higher levels.

(7) The gap between theory and application is one that concerns a variety of disciplines. For those in TCSL, a similar gap exists. Theories of language and theories of teaching and learning should inform TCSL textbooks design, but don't always. Some researchers are trying to bridge this gap. The studies relating to the use of -le, the distinction between -le1, -le2 (or even-le3) (e.g., Lu 1975; Chen 1979; Guo 1986) and research carried on the process of -le's acquisition have received considerable attention in the literature. Sun (1993) and Zhao (1996)'s case studies on the acquisition of -le by English native-speakers are detailed accounts of the kind of errors English L1 students are likely to make during acquiring of the Chinese -le and the developmental process they went through. However, all these studies focuses on the use and/or acquisition of –le; very little has dealt with learning Chinese as L3. One point Zhao (1996) makes in his footnotes is that student of divergent L1 background do produce some of the same errors, which echoes in our observation. This idea notes that there are errors independent of the learner's L1. Although he did not pursue any further whether those errors are due to the language being learned, or there are other factors such as L2 as we proposed, his attempt paves the way for more research on the influence of English as L2 in learning Chinese as L3, the metalinguistic use of English in TCSL textbooks and its effect on non-English speakers with English L2 learning Chinese as L3.

(8) The only existing corpus on learners' errors, Wai Guo Ren Xue Han Yu Bing Ju Fen Xi (Tong 1986), was published two decades ago. An updated corpus of this kind with the distinction of the speakers' L1 is in need.

Teaching adult foreigners Chinese is a great undertaking that has developed in the ascendant with brilliant prospects. It is considered as an effective vehicle of promoting the cultural exchanges and friendship among the people of all countries. It is, therefore,

an unshirkable task of us applied linguists and TSCL researchers to compile textbooks that play a decisive role in this regard. Compared to TESOL, TEFL and other disciplines concerning English teaching, TSCL is still in its infancy. While adopting and modifying the methods and theories developed for English teaching purposes, we should integrate the characters of the Chinese language and find a more efficient way of teaching Chinese as a second language.

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Appendices

* Photocopies of Relevant TCSL Textbooks (See Hardcopies).

Questionnaire

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learning? If any, how strong the influence is?
(8) Which language, Japanese or English, do you think influences your Chinese learning more?
(9) Which three grammar items do you think are the most difficult in Chinese?
(10) How do you learn Chinese apart from attending language schools?

Sentence Completion Task

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Complete the following sentences.

(1) Yesterday, I buy (le) a red car, I not buy (×) that blue.
'Yesterday, I *bought* a red car. I *didn't buy* that blue one.'
(2) Previous month, he at all times exercise (×) body.
'He *trained* all last month.'
(3) Last year I have (×) a very good car.
'I *had* a very good car last year.'
(4) He answer (le) that one question, answer (de) very correct.
'He correctly *answered* that question.'
(5) Mary examine (le) 100 Fen, I envy (×) her.

'Mary *got* 100% in the exam. I *envied* her.'

(6) He last month say (×) want come see me.
'He *said* last month that he would like to visit me.'

(7) Arrive (le) the Great Wall foot under, we three spontaneously say (×): 'Too wonderful!'
'Arriving at the foot of the Great Wall, three of us *said* together, 'Great!'

(8) Yesterday hear (le/×) this good news, I very happy (×).
'Yesterday I *was* very happy when I *heard* this good news.'

(9) Yesterday morning, I at museum door mouth wait (×) Mike, wait (×) 30 minutes.
'Yesterday morning, I *waited* for Mike at the entrance of the museum for thirty minutes.'

(10) That day he come find me time, I just look (zhe) book.
'When he *came* to see me that day, I *was* reading a book.'

(11) You have not have go (guo) Australia?
'Have you been to Australia?'

(12) Last year September we just come (×) Beijing, he already go (le) Shanghai.
'When we *came* to Beijing last September, he'd already gone to Shanghai.'

(13) Students sometimes at together talked (×) self wishes.
'Sometimes the students gathered together and *talked* about their wishes.'

(14) I come (×) China before, already know (×) China population very many.
'I already *knew* that China has a very big population before I *came* here.'

(15) This jian (CL) small event adequately manifest (le) mother to me GEN love.
'This small event *showed* me my mother's love.'